Chapter 6:

Natural Resources Management in a National Recreation Area

Among the many responsibilities of the Park Service at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, natural resources management is remarkable for the incredible array of responsibilities it encompassed and for the vast amount of time and attention it required. The park included three distinctly separate kinds of resources, the built, semi-natural, and natural environment. The park's wide expanse, different natural and built settings, myriad purposes, and sheer unwieldiness compelled a series of connected yet simultaneously discrete patterns of management. The park contained diverse natural features, including more threatened and endangered species than Yosemite, coastal and underwater resources, and typical natural resources such as scenic vistas and shorelines. Conventional management issues and themes such as visitor impact, grazing, and exotic species demanded constituency management. The unique array of features that the park encompassed compelled a broader approach to natural resource management than was typical in other similar park areas as well as more sophisticated planning to accommodate park constituencies.

Natural resource management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area became the boldest attempt in federal history to manage nature in an urban context. Unlike the large national parks in remote areas, at Golden Gate National Recreation Area the Park Service had little control over the impact of people on natural resources. The many park holdings created contradictory responsibilities. In the manner that people management involved persuading the public to see the virtues of the park in new ways, natural resources management demanded sensitivity to public needs as well as to the physical environment. Compliance with the statutes that governed agency practice loomed equally large. Golden Gate National Recreation Area seemed to contain everything: open spaces that included wildland with little evident human impact and recreational space, urban flora, exotic species, beaches, marshes, tide pools, the ocean, grasslands and grazing, and the complicated impact of people on land and water. Any form of management was a daunting task, one that required both compliance with regulations and an effort to persuade the public of the value of the goals that underpinned policy.

Finding a balance between use and protection became the defining goal of natural resources management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The Park Service historically erred on the side of protection, but this orientation proved a frustrating task in a park devoted to use. The natural features that the Park Service typically preserved were only part of a much greater integrated whole at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. As a result of the park's national recreation area designation, the public did not always recognize justification for restricting use anywhere in Golden Gate National Recreation Area. No single category illustrated the complications of Golden Gate National Recreation Area better than natural resources management.

The difference between a national recreation area and a traditional national park, the public's perception of their different purposes, again intruded not only on the process of making decisions about natural resources, but equally on the assessment of the value of those resources. Even after recognition of the park's significance as a natural resource in 1988, when Golden

Gate National Recreation Area received the designation of International Biosphere Reserve from the United Nations, the historic distinctions between categories of areas in the park system still influenced perception if not policy. Despite a generation of managing all park units under the same policies, park managers still reacted to a resource management issue in an urban park in a different way than they might at one of the traditional national parks. In part, this stemmed from perception and the influence of park users and other constituencies. "Difference" often came to mean the degree of difficulty associated with managing the resource.

Management questions at Golden Gate National Recreation Area were intrinsically tied to questions of use in a manner that would have shocked park managers at Yellowstone or Glacier National Parks. The complicated and multifaceted dimensions of the Park Service mission governed policy and decision-making. At the recreation area, the Park Service engaged in a delicate balancing act within the constraints created by an active and powerful community. Golden Gate National Recreation Area managed more people and their impact on natural resources than any other park unit in the system. The combination of the consequence of the many kinds of daily use, such as running, bicycling, dog-walking, and countless other activities, combined with the mandates of natural resource management, required great attention.

The difficulty of implementing even the most well-conceived program based on planning documents and scientific research illustrated the fundamental and basic issue of resource management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. In the Bay Area, planning helped create a process that moved the Park Service from reaction to anticipation, but it was only one part of a larger set of questions. These turned on the combination of the proprietary sense of users about the park, their adamant desire to hold fast to their values, which differed greatly from group to group, and the political clout they could bring to bear. The cooperation at the core of the park's strategy hamstrung the agency when it came to specific goals in areas such as resource management. The Park Service's commitment to participation assured public input and indeed respect, but conversely made implementation of the very plans constituencies approved more difficult. Natural resource management planning became a bind that pitted park goals against constituency desires. As the park formalized management goals with constituency input and approval, those constituencies sought new ends. Natural resource management and the plans it created laid important groundwork, but the ground consistently shifted.

The transformation of the legal structure in which parks operated catapulted resource management to a position of greater importance in the national park system following World War II. During the first three decades of the Park Service's existence, resource management had been an uneven and sometimes haphazard process. Prior to the 1940s, the agency's primary concern had been constructing facilities to accommodate its growing constituency. Landscape architects played an enormously important role in the Park Service during this time, their efforts culminating in "parkitecture," the proto-environmental design that characterized New Deal construction in the parks. Beginning in 1945, the Park Service moved toward more integrated park management, using scientific principles as the basis for management decisions. The agency capitalized on the availability of newly minted college graduates to professionalize its staff. Science and scientists became increasingly significant to the agency and its direction. The Leopold Report of 1963 solidified the position of scientific management in the agency, giving the discipline of ecology a much greater claim on policy making. As the 1960s continued, the Park Service became much more interested in managing natural and cultural resources, and by the following decade, legislative changes such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 added legal obligations to the Park Service's

administrative responsibilities in resource management.[273] By the time Golden Gate National Recreation Area was established in 1972, the agency had a full-fledged mission in natural resource management, policies to govern its actions, and clearly defined institutional responses to categories of issues.

The development of Golden Gate National Recreation Area paralleled the increasing sophistication of resource management and the sometimes cumbersome weight of new statutory and administrative responsibilities. Unlike earlier parks, Golden Gate National Recreation Area developed its policies in close association with the demands of a post-NEPA society. After NEPA, environmental impact statements and other mechanisms to permit public oversight of agency functions became an integral part of the management terrain. In resource management, as in every other area of park endeavor, the agency enjoyed less leeway at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. In the Bay Area, the Park Service managed in close concert with the public, other levels of government, and other federal agencies. While this diminished the autonomy that park managers long enjoyed elsewhere, it also created a strong basis for cooperation with surrounding entities, a trait that became essential with the addition of the Presidio. At the Bay Area park, resource management, always complex, multifaceted and subject to the constraints of the public and other governmental bodies, simultaneously offered the potential to strengthen relationships with other agencies and numerous constituencies.

The development of natural resource management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area mirrored other park practices. Initially, the Park Service reacted to the demands of its many constituencies. As it did in nearly every other area of park management, the agency began in a reactive mode. Response to the existing situation was the only possible way to begin at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Between 1972 and 1978, the agency collected data to support planning. The process yielded insight, shaped agency perspective, and left a clear impression of the community's goals and values. In this context, the Park Service could create a resource management plan even as it planned and discussed the general management plan. The two documents sprang from the same sources. Between 1978 and 1982, in a second phase that paralleled other park developments, the Park Service moved to create a full-fledged natural resource management plan. Following its approval in 1982, the agency implemented comprehensive plans to manage the many park resources, running headlong into the changing values of its communities and the new demands of a rapidly changing society. Planning became an important baseline, but even with public approval, the park could not always implement its plans with the support it may have anticipated. A constant redefining process followed, in which the park redesigned management policies in an effort to assuage constituencies.

Although natural and cultural resource management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area were intrinsically linked, the agency separated their management functions out of necessity. In part as a result of the patterns of agency management and equally because of the fundamental diversity of resources and the ungainly sprawl from Marin County to San Mateo County, centralized administration of resources was unfeasible. The park could plan at the macro level, but decisions had to play out in a local context in a manner that resembled the early U.S. Forest Service more than the Park Service.[274] In the same way that rangers faced different concerns in

---

[273] Richard Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 214-16; Ronald Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984), 133-36, 148-62; Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 1-14.

[274] Hal K. Rothman, ed., *"I'll Never Fight Fire with My Bare Hands Again: Recollections of the First Foresters of*

the different parts of the park, resource management questions and responses differed from location to location. As a result, even after implementation of a natural resource management plan, resource management demanded a series of localized responses that often could not be applied throughout the park. Even in the face of planning documents, the sheer diversity of resources and concomitant concerns mitigated against a park-wide natural resource management strategy. Natural resource management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area displayed a degree of grassroots autonomy peculiar to its situation.

Natural resource management began with perhaps the single most difficult task at Golden Gate National Recreation Area: trying to grasp the park's broad and various dimensions and finding a way to categorize them for management purposes. The process mirrored the pattern established earlier at the park; as the planners forging the GMP listened to the public, they learned a great deal about natural resources management needs as well. At the same time, the planning process articulated the park's general goals about natural resources. In 1975, the first studies that attempted to catalog the park's attributes were released. Initial reports such as the Preliminary Information Base Analysis, South Portion of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California and Preliminary Information Base Analysis, North of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument and Point Reyes National Seashore attempted to analyze the breadth of the park's resources. By 1977, a new document, Assessment of Alternatives for the General Management Plan for the Golden Gate NRA and Point Reyes NS, began to establish patterns that could become practice at the park. As in other areas of park management, the agency determined that a multifaceted park needed different management tactics and techniques in different areas.[275]

For the better part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area's first decade, park staff operated in the same reactive manner in natural resource management as they did in nearly every other area of management. As a collection of lands previously managed by other entities, the park needed baseline documentation to craft management strategies. The task facing park managers was enormous. Managing Golden Gate National Recreation Area meant more than listening to the public and responding to its needs. It also demanded data that could support principled, organized, and effective management that simultaneously conformed to statute and persuaded the public of the value of policy. Among the many needs was scientific research to define and support park strategies and policies.

After nearly a decade of responding to crises as the basis for planned management, the 1980 acceptance of the General Management Plan represented a moment of enormous significance in the park's history. Approval meant that Golden Gate National Recreation Area had a blueprint for developing a planned future, making it a park managed in accordance with a set of rules, regulations, goals, and objectives. But the GMP was simply an overarching view of park needs and approaches to achieving them. In a park with as many different features as Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the master plan was simply a starting point. Above all others, this park required grassroots and localized forms of management to account for the incredible variety of resources, situations, and constraints that the Park Service faced.

The first Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP), approved in 1982, typified the tension between the park as a series of interconnected entities and as discrete units managed

---

the Inland Northwest (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 1-17.

[275] *General Management Plan and Environmental Analysis, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore, September 1980* (San Francisco: National Park Service, 1980), 1-11.

semi-independently. Self-definition was crucial. "Most natural resource problems," the report continued, "have never been addressed." That succinct statement described the promise and the problem of natural resources management at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The park had a natural resources history that in many ways ran counter to the experience of the Park Service. The circumstances demanded a strategy that simultaneously defined, assessed, organized, and presented a plan for management.[276] Building off of the GMP's structure, the natural resources management plan reflected almost a decade of collecting information, responding to situations in the park, and listening to the public.

The plan was designed to promote the rehabilitation of Golden Gate National Recreation Area's ecosystems. Natural Resource Specialist Judd Howell's introduction to the NRMP described the document as an action plan, a guide to restore, conserve, and protect the park's natural resources. Only scientific research could serve as the basis for making decisions, the report averred, and the park lacked sufficient data about its resources. The report pointed to academics and outside institutions as the source for much of that baseline data. The next major natural resources need was a program to monitor changes in natural resources. The report envisioned that park staff would accomplish much of this day-to-day work, collecting data and monitoring specific situations. Combined with outside studies, the collected data could be used to achieve the third objective, active natural resources management.[277]

Understanding the park's many and varied resources required systematic division of parklands into categories that could be thought of as separate but interrelated entities. The NRMP began with the divisions created in the General Management Plan, focused on the natural resources zones, and used them as a template for managing nature in the park. The division into zones sorted landscapes first by use. An Intensive Landscape Management Zone, where exotic vegetation predominated, included the park's southern parts. A Natural Appearance Subzone, encompassing Ocean Beach, Fort Funston, Lands End, and Baker Beach offered a subset in which vistas were a primary value, but intensive management was prescribed for stabilization of the sand dune system. A Biotic Sensitivity Subzone, comprising the shoreline, ocean and underwater resources, and stream courses and riparian areas, complicated geographic organization. An Urban Landscape Subzone, comprising the park's most heavily trafficked areas, places such as Crissy Field, Fort Mason, the Fort Baker Parade Ground, and the developed area of Stinson Beach, illustrated the most comprehensive human impacts. The Pastoral Landscape Management Zone, comprising the Northern Olema Valley, revealed the setting and history of rural endeavor in the Bay Area. A Natural Landscape Management Zone that included the Marin Headlands, most of the Stinson Beach area, and the southern Olema Valley, allowed for the protection of the kinds of vistas that hikers and other recreational users most favored. Special Protection Zones, areas with legislative or special administrative recognition of exceptional qualities such as Muir Woods and Fort Point, where the intertidal ecosystem was of considerable interest, also were grouped separately. The division translated into the difference between the urban landscapes of San Francisco and semi-rural Marin County. Each of these areas functioned semi-autonomously, experienced different uses and engaged markedly different constituencies. With these distinctions, the NRMP created plans for specific areas within the scope of the overall direction established for Golden Gate National Recreation Area.[278]

---

[276] Judd A. Howell, *Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California* (San Francisco: National Park Service, 1982), 1.

[277] Ibid., 2.

[278] Ibid., 2-7.

The NRMP initiated management by definition, a process of using categorical subdivisions as the means to create flexible policy at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Natural resources management became a series of interrelated decision-making processes, governed by the GMP, the NRMP, and by the categorical designations within the two documents. This approach was a departure for the Park Service, a new tactic for new circumstances. Natural resources management plans at most parks treated resources as parts of a whole. At Golden Gate National Recreation Area, this strategy simply did not reflect existing conditions. The enormous population pressure on the park, the diversity of the many units, the differences in topography and terrain, and the fundamental ecological, cultural, and social differences demanded new management considerations.

Management by definition offered clear and proactive strategies, defined by the needs of the resource and often demonstrated by scientific research. The plan proposed to guarantee the general protection of resources by assessing, monitoring, and implementing policy based on information collected at the park. The impact of visitors on resources, erosion, the protection of water quality, and the close observation of development to prevent severe impact became the basis of policy. Plant management proceeded on a localized basis; decisions for each zone were based on the needs of that specific area. In one instance in 1982, animals grazed on seventeen leased tracts in Marin County, an activity that was only appropriate in the formerly pastoral areas north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Open space in the Marin Headlands or in the city of San Francisco clearly would not have been appropriate for such a use. In addition to proscribing strategy, the plan made possible localized decisions about issues such as pesticide use and prescribed burning, confirming grassroots needs as the overarching factor in decision-making. In issues such as pesticide use and burning, this practice created authority that supported local decisions and played an important role in persuading communities to accept new management.

The drawbacks to a policy of management by definition stemmed from the same sources as its advantages. As it localized management goals and themes, this strategy worked against integrated management of the natural resources of the entire park. Different areas were treated in a discrete manner; natural resources were separated from cultural resources and other issues. The division into categories compelled a hierarchical ranking of resources, creating priorities and sometimes obscuring and even devaluing other features of the same land. These rigid forms of management for specific purposes ran the risk of limiting professional and public perceptions of individual park areas. Each subarea could become a discrete feature, valuable individually but not as part of a whole. Creating a plan necessarily meant establishing priorities. At Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the need for organization had the potential to impinge upon an overall plan of management for park resources.

Before the NRMP, resource management remained fundamentally reactive. Although planning had become a standard part of natural resource management throughout the park system, the variety of issues and the limits in personnel and financing left Golden Gate National Recreation Area behind many of its peers. By 1982, the Bay Area park initiated all kinds of resource management, but where the research had not yet been accomplished, planning remained speculative. Although much research had been accomplished by 1982, some decisions were not underpinned by basic scientific research or monitoring. Despite the best intentions of park managers, resource management retained a haphazard quality. In some areas, remarkable omissions jumped out. In 1980, the park lacked a fire management plan, an essential part of the program at most major park areas by this time. The threat of catastrophic fire from built-up fuel loads had become a growing concern, and the agency scrambled to prepare for the consequences. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, a likely candidate for such a document because of the

devastating history of fires in the Bay Area, had not even begun the research. The oft-repeated phrase that the park managed people rather than resources seemed an accurate description of the state of resource management after nearly a decade of the Park Service presence.[279]

The NRMP created a blueprint for managing natural resource issues, but from its inception, the goals of the plan and those of many of the constituencies diverged. With resource management governed by statute and driven by the decision-making process, the Park Service had to face constituencies that held other visions of the park's meaning as well as scientists who might interpret the agency's data in different ways. When the park instituted resource management programs, the same sort of local resistance that every other plan, program, idea, or concept put forward by park administrators emerged. Particularly when the plans involved natural resource protection, the agency encountered a local public that often regarded use as a higher value. Even the process of collecting information and monitoring resources could engender local hostility. Constituency-building and agency mandate clashed. The Park Service remained in the complicated position of seeking the support of people whose uses of the park were not always in concert with agency goals, standards, and policies.

The park achieved notable successes with community stewardship and environmental restoration programs. At Wolfback Ridge, Milagra Ridge, and Oakwood Valley, the park was able to fuse its values with those of the public in community stewardship programs that encouraged the public to regard the park's resources as their own. This bridged the eternal gap created by nomenclature designation; no matter what the park was labeled, when communities invested in the ecology of the park, the agency needed to do considerably less to persuade people of the value of resources. Restoration projects also benefit from the close attention. At places such as Serpentine Bluffs in the Presidio, ecological restoration recreated natural environments. Flora and wetlands throughout the park were part of a comprehensive program to restore park ecology.

In a variety of instances, including the removal of exotic species such as feral pigs, the controversy over mountain-biking, the reintroduction of the Tule elk, and efforts to combat oil spills on the coast, the NRMP served as a set of guidelines that gave the agency a clear path to implement its goals. In each circumstance, the response of the public demanded refinement of agency values and indeed prerogatives, and the agency reassessed its planning and adroitly conceived of new and often parallel strategies that could be implemented with less resistance. The plan set a baseline document; the implementation of policy followed in a pattern that often seemed to mimic the reactive first decade of Golden Gate National Recreation Area history. Yet in the process, the agency implemented goals and kept the constituencies it needed satisfied by accommodating their needs.

By the 1980s, exotic species management had become a flash point for the Park Service. The 1963 Leopold report argued that the park system should preserve "vignettes of primitive America," and by the 1980s, the agency had a firm policy of ridding parks of exotic animals and plants. In most parks, such management took place quietly; the removal of tamarisk and other noxious plants typified the easiest kinds of exotic plant eradication. Few strongly identified with salt cedar or other opportunistic xeric plants. Animals provided a more complicated scenario. Eradication programs had a long and checkered history in the park system. The first eradication programs began as the 1930s ended. Burros at Death Valley National Monument were the first animals hunted by park rangers, establishing removal or eradication as the dominant policy for

---

[279] Howell, *Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment*, 2, 118-22; Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

exotic species. As the 1970s began, full-scale programs to remove nonnative species became common in the park system. During the following three decades, the standard established by the Leopold Report held. But the shift in American values and the increasing tendency of friends of the Park Service to question agency resource management decisions meant that by the middle of the 1970s, "burro shoots," the colloquial term for eradication by gunfire, came under scrutiny. Organizations such as the Fund For Animals (FFA) advocated other means of animal removal. While in some situations the FFA succeeded in safely removing animals, hunting exotic species remained an integral part of natural resources management policy in the park system.[280]

The nature of exotic species in question often determined the response. The feral pigs of Marin County, "Marin's Huge, Hungry, Hairy Marauders," one newspaper headline called them, became the premier exotic species management question at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. European boars had first been brought to the Bay Area by William Randolph Hearst and others during the 1920s. The wealthy landowners wanted to hunt these exotic animals. As was the case with most stock introductions, a few of the animals escaped and over time, communities of escaped boars spread throughout north-central California. No one knew how the animals migrated from Hearst's San Simeon grounds, but by 1970, feral pigs lived in nearly thirty counties in the area. They made their initial appearance in the Lagunitas Creek watershed between 1976 and 1980, where they were typically found on Marin Municipal Water District lands and on the slopes of Mount Tamalpais. Researchers determined that the core area, the base from which the pigs spread in Marin County, was located within a legislated fish and game reserve on state land. Until the early 1980s and the codification of the NRMP, Golden Gate National Recreation Area largely observed the pigs from a distance. They were a county issue, or in some circumstances an issue for Point Reyes National Seashore, but with all the other issues at the park, feral pigs were something staff could treat as a secondary concern.[281]

But only for so long. By 1982, some animals had left the slopes of Mount Tamalpais and entered the recreation area. Pigs presented a clear hazard; in the wild, these animals developed some of the traits of the famed Arkansas razorbacks, the feared hogs of American folklore. These ridgebacks had powerful tusks, were low to the ground, and very fast while weighing as much as 300 pounds. They were "very strong, wild animals," Skip Schwartz of the Audubon Canyon Ranch observed. "Anything that can't get out of their way gets eaten." The pigs demolished landscapes, leading one park ranger to observe that the lands they covered looked like they had been plowed by a tractor. In one instance, the pigs rooted most of the habitat of the Calypso orchid, an increasingly endangered plant. Pig populations could double in as little as four months, and they soon seemed to be everywhere in West Marin. NPS ranger Jay Eickenhorst found them in his back yard at Stinson Beach. The pigs were also a hazard to traffic. In a 1985 automobile-pig accident on Highway 1, a motorist hit a 300-pound hog. The car was demolished, the driver unhurt, and the pig had to be put to sleep.[282]

---

[280] Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 258-61; Hal Rothman, *On Rims and Ridges: The Los Alamos Area Since 1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 277-81; Hal Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the U.S. Since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 53-64; Pet Policy Hearing, June 14, 1978, PFGGNRA II, Box 2, Pet Policy; A. Starker Leopold, S. A. Cain, C. M. Cottam, et. al., *Wildlife Management in the National Parks* (Washington, D.C.: Advisory Board on Wildlife Management, 1963).

[281] "Pigs Invade Coast," *Coastal Post*, January 21 1985; Heidi Siegmund, "Feral Pigs Menace Now Worries Feds," *PRL*, June 27, 1985; "Eat-Anything Wild Pigs Make Marin Residents Bristle," *SJMN,* May 22, 1985.

[282] Joan Reutinger, "Low-slung Feral Pigs Reach Shoreline Highway;" "Wild Boars Loose in Marin County," May 1985, OCPA, Box 8, Press Clippings; Brandon Spars, "Pigs All Too Plentiful on the Slopes of Mount Tam," *Marin*

The feral pigs were an exotic species, without the support of a public constituency, that had an immediate and severe impact on park resources. Forming alliances and making policy to address them was an easier task than it had been with even feral dogs. The clamor against the pigs in Marin County was loud and consistent. "Coastal Pig War Is Coming," one headline read. A Farley cartoon, a local editorial comic strip, featured feral pigs in punk apparel driving BMWs as a way of illustrating public trepidation. The pigs' impact on the environment was powerful and in many ways frightening. Feral pigs threatened almost everyone.[283]

As feral pigs became a regional boogeyman, an eradication program became a widely embraced goal. The Bay Area was among the most publicly liberal places in the nation, and agency officials anticipated opposition to the idea of shooting even wild boars. The resistance did not materialize. The size, speed, and rapid rate of reproduction of these animals increased the widespread sense that the threat needed to be addressed with certainty and severity. Everyone quickly recognized that it was much easier to discuss elimination of these feral, facile, powerful animals than it was to actually get rid of them. With every other agency that managed land in Marin County, including the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD), the California Department of Parks and Recreation, which administered Mount Tamalpais State Park, and the Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR), the Park Service forged a Memorandum of Understanding that was signed in 1985. The agencies agreed to a two-pronged approach to pig management. One goal, containment, was an attempt to keep the animals in existing terrain. During the next two years, the Park Service built a $90,000 fence on Bolinas Ridge in an attempt to confine the feral pigs. The other goal was extermination. The agencies agreed to hunt, trap, and otherwise eliminate the boars wherever they could find them and devised a set of rules to govern their interaction.[284]

The Park Service responded with special aggressiveness to the threat of resource destruction by feral pigs. As California state agencies grappled with the ramifications of their decision, the Park Service contracted the extermination of the feral pigs in the Bolinas Ridge area. In 1985, the agency applied for a $104,000 grant from the San Francisco Foundation through GGNPA to trap and eliminate the swine and to rehabilitate the lands the pigs damaged. One year later, more than sixty pigs, estimated at about twenty percent of the park's population, had been killed within the park and the beginning of comprehensive management of this exotic species began.[285]

Feral pigs remained an important issue for the park. The size, reproductive capability, and behavior of the animals assured that they were an ongoing issue. The animals had taken root in

---

Messenger, February 6, 1985.

283 "Coastal Pig War Is Coming," *Coastal Post*, January 21, 1985.

284 Memorandum of Understanding Between National Park Service and Marin Municipal Water District, Audubon Canyon Ranch, Marin County Open Space District, California Department of Parks and Recreation, [and] Meadow Club, NRMR, Box 2, 1985 Activities; Joan Reutinger, "Great Big Pig Fence Erection," *Coastal Post*, February 23, 1987.

285 "1985 Annual Report," SOA II; "Golden Gate NRA FY 1986 Annual Report Highlights," 1986 Activities; Chief, Resource Management and Planning to General Superintendent, March 19, 1985, "1985 Activities"; Associate Regional Director, Resource Management and Planning to Associate Regional Director Finance, April 15, 1987, all NRMR, Box 2, 1987 Activities; Alison Willy, "Feral Hog Management at GGNRA," NRMR, Box 4, 1991 Correspondence.

the larger Bay Area, and the combination of fences and hunting programs served only to contain their expansion—in some circumstances. As in many similar situations in the national park system, feral exotic species established a toehold and while the agency had the will to dislodge the animals, they lacked both the resources and the ability to control what happened beyond park boundaries. As a result, Golden Gate National Recreation Area could contain feral pigs, could even slow or stop growth in their numbers within the park, but could not genuinely expect to eradicate them or even under most conditions entirely rid the park of them. Park efforts amounted to containment and stasis in population. As in many similar cases, managing pigs could take the Park Service only so far toward its goals.

Other exotic species were more perplexing. Some nonnative species enjoyed the support of vocal and energized stakeholders and they became an entirely different kind of management issue. Where the Park Service could enjoy the community's support when it took a firm stand against feral pigs, when it came to domestic dogs and feral cats, two of the banes of any urban area, the situation changed. Strays abounded because the park provided one of the few open spaces in the increasingly crowded Bay Area. Generally, the park system treated cats as an exotic species, a nonnative animal that might impinge upon the natural setting. Dogs were typically excluded from national park areas except when they were on trails and restrained by leashes. But roaming dogs and cats were very different questions than exotic species such as burros. In an urban park classed as a national recreation area, the presumption in favor of the removal of exotic species did not have the weight it carried at Grand Canyon National Park, Bandelier National Monument, Death Valley National Monument, and other parks that faced similar questions. The existing rules in the federal code simply did not fit an urban park area.

On one level, friction stemmed from turf disputes between land management agencies. California State Fish and Game officials, pursuing an agenda of their own, challenged park policy. They rejected the NPS explanation, trumpeted their own management policy as a better alternative, and attempted to marshal public support to affect Golden Gate National Recreation Area policy. The state agencies still harbored some resentment toward the Park Service's acquisition of the remarkable array of resources that became Golden Gate National Recreation Area, especially after 1978, when economic changes began to cripple the state's ability to finance programs. After the fundamental change in management that the new caps on property taxes demanded, state agencies grappled for new roles. One of these involved lobbying other organizations to continue the practices that state agencies could no longer manage. At Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore, this often translated into attempts to influence Park Service policy. The Park Service easily regarded such actions as gratuitous and the California Department of Fish and Game became an adversary. The state agency sponsored a study of exotic deer in 1974 and sought to persuade the Park Service to support its conclusions. To some park managers, Fish and Game seemed to be trying to dictate policy at national park areas; no matter what the Park Service decided, Fish and Game advocated objectives designed to complicate the agency's management. If the Park Service favored hunting, the state agency wanted more access to the hunt; if the agency opposed hunting, the state demanded it. Especially during the early 1980s, when James Watt served as secretary of the interior, the Park Service found itself beset both by Fish and Game and an Interior Department simultaneously hostile to resource management goals and supportive of the demands of local constituencies. Only powerful support for park goals among organizations such as PFGGNRA allowed the Park Service to implement its plans; even successful implementation did not end

efforts by California Fish and Game to influence the park. In the overlapping jurisdictions that characterized Marin County, the issue surfaced time and again.[286]

Another natural resource management question, the presence of native and introduced predators, complicated relations with the public. The Park Service regarded predators as indicators of the ecosystem's health, and the growing prevalence of bobcats in the Marin Headlands meant that the Park Service needed a research program to track the species. The necessity to track other predators also became evident. The park was home to grey foxes, mountain lions, and coyotes as well, demanding baseline data to understand the predators, manage their population, and utilize their native instincts to further the goals of resource management. A memorandum of agreement with the state was the first step, followed by a research proposal to monitor and assess predators in the park.[287]

The Park Service also sought to reintroduced missing avian species to the park. An important step in this direction began in 1983 when three fledgling peregrine falcons were brought to a nest at Muir Beach. Peregrine falcons had been common in California until the use of pesticides became common and as late as the 1930s, Marin County had been home to a number of pairs of the species. The use of DDT especially affected the peregrines, thinning the shells of their eggs and limiting the birds' reproductive capabilities. By the 1970s, few residents could recall seeing the birds. At the end of the decade, the bird was listed as an endangered species. The Peregrine Fund's Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, which raised the birds from eggs, provided fledglings for the 1983 program. Within a few weeks, nine fledglings were nesting near Muir Beach and another pair were installed at Point Reyes National Seashore. To further the reintroduction, the Park Service requested that the Federal Aviation Administration limit flights that passed over Muir Beach and Tennessee Cove in an effort to help the birds acclimate to the new location. The program continued until 1989, when park funding became unavailable.[288]

Golden Gate National Recreation Area provided a haven for a number of avian species, including a range of hawks and other raptors. The birds migrated north across the Golden Gate each year, providing a popular activity for regional bird-watchers. Both the National Wildlife Federation and the Audubon Society participated in annual counts. In 1983, the park began a volunteer raptor observation program based on the project statements in the NRMP. Woefully underfunded, the program received only $1,035.44 in the first year and slightly less during the second. In 1985, the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory was formed. This volunteer program,

---

[286] "Fish and Game Are Studying Point Reyes Exotic Deer," *PRL,* September 26, 1974; Spencer Read, "Deer, Geese Hunt Proposal," *PRL,* October 1, 1981; Jay Goldman, "Seashore Hunting Proposal: Interior Department Directs Park Service to Consider Public Hunt," *PRL,* November 3, 1983; Henry W. Elliott, III, Charles Van Riper III, and Lynn D. Whittig, "A Study to Assess Competition and Carrying Capacity Among of the Ungulates of Point Reyes National Seashore," Technical Report no. 10, March 1983, PFGGNRA I, Box 16, Point Reyes National Seashore, Undertakings.

[287] "Pre-Proposal, Predator Research, Golden Gate National Recreation Area," NRMR, Box 2, 1987 Activities; Memorandum of Understanding by and Between National Park Service, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and California Department of Fish and Game Relating to the Study of Carnivores, NRMR , Box 2, 1987 Activities.

[288] "GGNRA Site of Peregrine Falcon Reintroduction," National Park Service Press Release, May 29, 1983, OCPA, Box 11, September 1988; Sylvia Lang, "Peregrine Falcons Set Free in Marin," *MIJ,* May 31, 1983; General Superintendent, Memorandum; Workshop to Prioritize Natural Resource Issues, February 8, 1990, NRMR, Box 4, Correspondence 1990.

jointly sponsored by the Park Service and the Golden Gate National Park Association and financed with a $97,500 grant from the San Francisco Foundation, was designed to track the roughly 10,000 migratory raptors that crossed the Golden Gate between September and December of each year. From Hawk Hill, the hilltop of the abandoned Battery Construction no. 129 in the Marin Headlands, volunteer "hawk watchers" observed thousands of birds pass overhead. The birds were counted, and through a wildlife-oriented Volunteer in the Parks program, significant numbers were banded for future tracking. By 1986, the program made it possible to track the hawks as they migrated. In 1986, the group provided 500 hours of coverage, up from 400 the previous year. In addition, specially trained volunteers helped band birds and check their health.[289]

The raptor program illustrated the results of the planning process and the NRMP in dramatic ways. Before the program, bird-watching was a recreational hobby, but bird counting occurred in an idiosyncratic fashion, usually when interested people took the time to count birds during the fall. Using a project statement from the NRMP, Judd Howell was able to integrate existing activities within park boundaries into agency goals. With the help of concerned activists such as Carter Faust, who counted hawks beginning in 1982, the park was able to create support for agency goals, fit management objectives with public desires, and collect important baseline data to support future decision making. It also inspired volunteers to undertake other related activities. In 1987, Buzz Hull, a volunteer raptor bander, initiated his own study of Great horned owls of the Marin Headlands under the volunteer program's auspices. The Park Service embraced the project, clearing the way for Hull's research. Again the objectives of park managers and the public coincided in a way that benefited both.[290]

Other endangered, threatened, or unusual avian species benefited from the implementation of the natural resource management plan. The agency was able to monitor species such as Heermann's gull, first observed nesting in the United States on Alcatraz Island in 1980. Smaller than the more common Western gull, Heermann's gull was common along the West Coast, but until the nesting pair were discovered on Alcatraz, the species had never been recorded as nesting outside of Mexico. Located near Cell Block 1 on the island, Heermann's gulls failed to breed in 1982. Disappointed staff observed that the absence of human interference in the area set aside for Heermann's gulls appeared to allow Western gulls to multiply at the expense of Heermann's gulls. Western gulls became the dominant population, but Heermann's gulls remained a visible presence. Black-crowned night herons, threatened in the Bay Area, Pelagic cormorants, and Common murres also found an opportunity to breed on Alcatraz Island.[291]

---

[289] Judd A. Howell to Henry G. Weston Jr., December 22, 1983, NRMR, Box 1, 1983 Activities; Natural Resources Specialist to Chief, Resources Management and Planning, November 29, 1984, NRMR, Box 2, 1984 Activities; Raptor Migration Observatory, Post-Season Briefing, NRMR, Box 2, 1986 Raptor Program; "Raptor Migration Observatory, 3/5/86 Meeting Notes," NRMR, Box 2, 1986 Raptor Program; Gregory Moore to Lawrence I. Kramer, March 20, 1986, NRMR, Box 2, 1986 Raptor Program; San Francisco Foundation Monitor's Report, NRMR, Box 2, 1986 Raptor Program; Raptor Migration Observatory, "Summary of the 1986 Fall Migration," NRMR, Box 2, 1986 Raptor Program.

[290] Raptor Migration Observation, Post-Season Briefing; Buzz Hull to Judd Howell, November 24, 1986, NRMR, Box 2, Raptor Program, 1987.

[291] *Natural Resource Management Plan*, 44-45; Natural Resource Management Specialist to General Superintendent, May 17, 1982, NRMR, Box 1, Activities 1982.

The removal of eucalyptus trees, an exotic species that seemed to have taken over the Bay Area, illustrated one of the problems of managing natural resources. Even as the park reintroduced native species, some exotics gained at the expense of native plants. When those exotics were much beloved, it posed a management problem for the park and inspired response from the public. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the eucalyptus removal program became another of the countless hot issues that defined Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Again, a well-planned, professional natural resources management objective encountered the kind of resistance that typified NPS experience at the park. Public constituencies with an interest in the trees and increasingly suspicious of government agencies fought implementation. Despite the clarity of planning and policy and a preponderance of scientific data, the public saw the eucalyptus as a symbol of their region.

The eucalyptus, a native of Australia, first came to California with the Gold Rush and American settlement. The popular tree was first noted in the Golden State in 1856. Because it grew quickly, it was a popular replacement for areas that had been clear cut of redwoods and Douglas fir. Prized for its qualities as fast-spreading ground cover, possible timber, and its role as an insectrifuge, the eucalyptus became a widely used for windbreaks and ground cover. The Army also valued the eucalyptus and planted countless trees between 1883 and 1910 in an attempt to "beautify" the windswept uplands of the Presidio. The trees were seen as ornamentals, as groundcover for scrub landscape, and as a windbreak, a way to cut the fierce winds that made the scenic slopes of the Presidio almost inhabitable. As was often the case with transplants in the New World, the eucalyptus overwhelmed any competitors and spread wildly, becoming one of the dominant trees around the Golden Gate. Eucalyptus trees were everywhere in the Bay Area, but especially on the Presidio and in the Marin Headlands. They were so common that in the 1970s and early 1980s that the Army initiated a removal program at the Presidio, but as with other military decisions, the removal program was not subject to public comment. The military cut its trees in relative quiet.[292]

For the Park Service, the terrain in which decision making took place was a great deal more contested. During its first decade, Golden Gate National Recreation Area simply overlooked the eucalyptus. Park staff faced myriad issues with vocal publics, many of them problems far more pressing than the removal of exotic trees that had become so much a part of the regional landscape that few regarded them as nonnative. Although natural resource management documents always pointed out that the eucalyptus were intruders on the landscape, until 1985 the park did little more than nod toward the idea of removal. As late as 1984, the park had yet to initiate a eucalyptus eradication program. On its list of natural resource priorities that year, eucalyptus removal ranked fourth, along with broom grass and other exotics.[293]

The eucalyptus drew fresh attention as a result of the interest of a highly placed agency official. In 1985, Thomas M. Gavin, regional plant ecologist in the Park Service's Western Region, brought the eucalyptus to the forefront of regional attention. "Every morning and evening, I stare at the eucalyptus groves which dot the landscape to the west of Highway 101,"

---

[292] Achva Benzinberg Stein and Jacqueline Claire Moxley, "In Defense of the Nonnative: The Case of the Eucalyptus," *Landscape Journal* 42, 35-43; Erwin N. Thompson, *Defender of the Gate: The Presidio of San Francisco, A History from 1846 to 1995*, 2 vols. (San Francisco: National Park Service, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, 1997); 221-22, 228, 232-33; Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900 AD* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1-43.

[293] *Natural Resources Management Plan*, 60-66.

he observed in a widely circulated memo to the regional director, "and am confronted with the same question: as a principle natural resources management staff to the regional director, why have I not taken upon myself to recommend to him that we begin to remove this exotic species?" Gavin recognized that the Bay Area was a volatile place and any attempt to remove the trees was a guaranteed prelude to controversy, but agency policy dictated the removal of exotics. Eucalyptus had supporters and detractors, but the tree was an established presence. To initiate a program of removal meant negotiating the complicated social and cultural minefields of the Bay Area and especially Marin County.[294]

Gavin recognized that his memo had the potential to thoroughly disrupt the agency's practices in the Bay Area. The park alone could not initiate a program, Gavin believed, and the recommended scope and scale of removal—a total of 632 acres—stretched the imagination of park staff. Gavin sought to open eucalyptus stands in both Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore to a Forest Service–style timber sale. Frankly controversial, the proposal presented a pragmatic option that eliminated the myriad problems of control as well as the immense fire hazard that eucalyptus presented. In Gavin's estimation, the Park Service could solve a difficult ecological management problem, have the solution pay for itself, and promote the overall ecological health of parklands. Park staff supported the proposal, seeing in it the same ecological advantages as did Gavin. Only the public remained; to successfully implement such an eradication program, the agency needed the public to understand its mission and goals. Gavin understood that the implementation of such a plan required time, energy, and capital to promote. Even though the state park system had begun some limited eucalyptus removal, the breadth of the NPS program meant that it was sure to engender outspoken opposition.[295]

The Park Service announced its removal plan on Arbor Day, a holiday set aside for the planting of trees, and inflamed opponents. Eucalyptus had a long history in California and some regarded the tree as totemic, a symbol of the Golden State; the timing of the announcement seemed insensitive to portions of the Bay Area environmental community. A drawn-out public scrape followed, with advocates of the eucalyptus assailing the park at every opportunity. Some formed a group called Preserve Our Eucalyptus Trees (POET), devoting to stopping the Park Service. In a particularly outspoken opinion-editorial piece, San Rafael surgeon Ed Miller called the Park Service "short-sighted and downright foolish" for seeking to remove the trees. To Miller, trees—any trees—were better than a lack of them. Others countered his view, using ecological, scientific and other rationale. Throughout 1986 and 1987, the issue remained controversial in Marin County and as late as 1988, the Park Service trod lightly when it presented eucalyptus removal plans to the public. "No large eucalyptus trees will be removed," a typical announcement from 1988 revealed. "The program is part of an ongoing project to contain the eucalyptus groves within the area of the original plantings." The choice of language suggested the tentative nature of the agency's stance.[296]

---

[294] Regional Plant Ecologist to Regional Director, September 30, 1985, NRMR, Box 2, Correspondence 1985.

[295] Regional Plant Ecologist to Regional Director, September 30, 1985; Marin Unit Manager to General Superintendent, January 3, 1986, both NRMR, Box 2, 1986 Activities.

[296] Dale Champion, "A Plan to Chop Marin Eucalyptus," *SFC,* March 8, 1986; Press Release, "Citizens' Group Formed to Fight Clearcutting Proposal in Marin," November 12, 1986, NRMR, Box 6, Natural Resources General, 1986; Ed Miller, "Save the Eucalyptus," *MIJ,* August 1, 1987; Bruce Follansbee and Marylee Guinon, "Bad News Trees," *MIJ,* August 15, 1987; Anne West, "Why Trees Should Go," *MIJ,* October 20, 1987; "Dear Park Resident

When it came to public controversy, animal and plant removal could not compare to fire management. No activity had greater potential to make the public uncomfortable. In the Bay Area, the very mention of fire invoked the specter of the conflagration that swept the town in the aftermath of the Earthquake of 1906. For three days and two nights, fires continued, leveling nearly 500 city blocks.[297] San Francisco ever after feared fire, a situation exacerbated by wildland fires in Berkeley in 1923 and Mill Valley in 1929 (and eventually in Oakland in 1991).

The National Park Service and the rest of the nation shared the same sentiments for better than fifty years. Fire was anathema to anyone who lived in open land; before sophisticated systems of pumping and the infrastructure to deliver water, fire was the single most threatening menace to communities and land managers alike. Generations of park rangers spent their careers viewing fire as the enemy. Beginning with the Leopold Report in 1963, the rise of scientific management in the park system sought to change that perception. In many parks, fire suppression created thick understories with enormous fuel loads around trees, a precondition of powerful and hard-to-stop forest fires. Many species of trees depended upon fire to initiate seed germination, a process blocked by the intense flames that resulted from long-term fire suppression. Some plants and trees also depended upon fire to keep competitors away. Science offered a new method to address this issue, the implementation of programs of prescribed burning. By the mid-1970s, the Park Service began such programs in more than a dozen parks, and in some wildland parks allowed a policy of letting natural fires, typically started by lightning, burn themselves out without human intervention.[298]

At Golden Gate National Recreation Area, fire management began slowly and quietly. Controlled and managed burn policies remained controversial, and in an urban area with a history of fire such as that in the San Francisco Bay Area, any talk of permitting fires to burn received a predictably quick and negative response. Fire suppression created an equally dangerous situation, and with support of many, but in the full knowledge that others might respond negatively, the agency quietly began one. As the planning process yielded the management plans, Judd Howell, instrumental in Golden Gate National Recreation Area's development of natural resource planning, studied fire management in the park's coastal plant communities as part of his master's degree program. Howell served as the point person for scientific management, organizing meetings to discuss strategy and goals, planning a daylong workshop for other interested agencies, and generally promoting the fire concept. Howell temporarily left the park to undertake Ph.D. work at the University of California, Davis. When he returned in 1983, he implemented a fire management program as research for his doctoral dissertation. Howell's work influenced park policy. The Natural Resources Management Plan noted the need for a fire management program. Doug Nadeau, chief of the Division of Resource Management and Planning, advocated such a program, informing the general superintendent that fire management presented "the most effective and economical way of restoring and maintaining the park's vegetation communities in a desirable condition."[299]

---

and Park Partners," September 23, 1988, NRMR, Box 6, Eucalyptus Containment, 1988.

[297] Tom Cole, *A Short History of San Francisco* (San Francisco: Lexikos, 1981), 104-07; Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts, *The San Francisco Earthquake* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), 152-55, 188-94.

[298] Sellers, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 253-58; Pyne, *Fire in America*.

[299] Judd M. Howell to Regional Director, Western Region, September 10, 1981; Judd M. Howell to Dick Hardin, Steve Olsen, Dick Danielson, Marvin Hershey, and Terry Swift, October 13, 1981; Chief, Division of Resource

Prescribed burning had numerous advantages as a management tool. It helped reduce the accumulated fuel load, an ongoing danger to resources and people. This was particularly important because during the Watt administration at the Department of the Interior, neither the California State Parks nor the Park Service possessed the work power to effectively fight major conflagrations. Prescribed burning was a small step toward lessening the danger of extensive wild fire compounded by built-up fuel load. In addition, prescribed fire helped clear exotic plant species, making room for native plants and restoring habitat for species such as the Tule elk.[300] From a manager's perspective, prescribed burning was good science and good policy.

As Golden Gate National Recreation Area moved toward putting its fire management program in place, the concept of managed fire received negative local publicity. High winds and greater than expected quantities of dry brush pushed a prescribed wilderness burn in Point Reyes National Seashore out of control. Before the fire was contained, it burnt fifty acres more than anticipated. Because the burn took place within a wilderness area, the Park Service response was limited by law to the least intrusive tool for the task. The entire fire crew consisted of six men with hand tools. They could not successfully contain the spread of the fire.[301] While the event did no lasting damage to either the land or the concept of managed fire, it did put a segment of the general population on alert for subsequent park endeavors.

Marin County became the initial focus of fire management programs. Early in 1983, General Superintendent John H. Davis described Golden Gate National Recreation Area's managed burn program as in its initial stage. In March 1984, the park informed nearby property owners that small-scale prescribed burning would commence the following month. A one-and-one-half acre research burn in Oakwood Valley near the Tennessee Valley Road was the initial endeavor. The fire was designed to provide information about fuel-load reduction, the response of eucalyptus to fire, and seed germination of plants. April was chosen because the grass remained wet and danger of the fire's spread was low.[302] As the program became an integral part of park strategy, the Park Service worked to keep the local community informed.

Developing a fire strategy for the San Francisco portions of the park offered another of the murky situations for which Golden Gate National Recreation Area had become renowned. The park, the city and county of San Francisco had never entered into an agreement about firefighting within the park. The city and county fire departments always responded to calls within park boundaries, but had no obligation to continue the practice. The Park Service also relied on the Presidio Fire Department at Forts Mason, Baker, Barry, and Cronkhite. As the Park Service contemplated specific fire planning, this question demanded resolution. Although prescribed burns were unlikely except under stringently controlled situations in the city and even

---

Management and Planning, July 14, 1982, NRMR, Box 1, 1981 Activities.

[300] *Fire Management Plan, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, February 19, 1985*; Chief Resource Management to General Superintendent, March 4, 1987, NRMR, Box 2, Correspondence 1987.

[301] Tom Graham, "Control Burn Chars 250 Acres at Seashore," *PRL*, September 30, 1982.

[302] John H. Davis to Outdoor Art Club, March 14, 1984; John H. Davis to Marin City Community Services District, March 12, 1984; John H. Davis to Marin View Community Association, March 14, 1984; John H. Davis to Tamalpais Valley Improvement Club, March 14, 1984; John H. Davis to Headlands Homeowners Association, March 14, 1984; John H. Davis to Marin Conservation League, March 14, 1984; John H. Davis to Muir Woods Park Improvement Club, March 14, 1984; all NRMR, Box 1, Correspondence 1984.

though the fire departments treated the park as their obligation, the lack of an agreement posed an issue for the park.[303]

Fire management demanded policy and as the emphasis on a program of controlled burning grew, the agency created planning documents for fire. The Park Service enacted comprehensive fire management guidelines in 1983. In the light of those guidelines, the park devised its own strategy, which culminated in the *Fire Management Plan*, a 1985 addendum to the *Natural Resource Management Plan*. The agency addressed two very different dimensions of fire management: suppression, which had been de facto practice for most of the century, and prescribed burning. The plan provided the justification for controlled burning, articulating the problems of long-term suppression. Fuel loads reached dangerously high levels and exotic xeric—dry—plants, which flourished when fires were suppressed, threatened native plant communities. Marin County became the focal point for fire management because prescribed burning within even the Presidio in San Francisco was simply too dangerous. Under the plan, lightning fires and other conflagrations would continue to be suppressed. Prescribed burning would begin with small areas, initial burns of one to twenty-five acres, in an effort to gather information before attempting any larger endeavors.[304] The Park Service wanted to proceed carefully.

The *Fire Management Plan* offered both a rationale for fire management and a strategy for bringing other agencies into the process. Fire remained an enormous threat especially in Marin County, and the Park Service's new emphasis on fire management allowed cooperation with other agencies. The process accelerated quickly; within two years of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area fire plan, the Park Service and California State Parks and Recreation signed a memorandum of agreement concerning fire management. The move toward an agreement began with interagency cooperation on road use for fire response, the kind of cooperation essential to managing adjacent lands that were administered by different agencies. By 1987, a full-fledged memorandum of understanding (MOU) had been implemented, describing the responsibilities of both state parks and the NPS along the Mount Tamalapis–Muir Woods boundary.[305]

Segments of the public remained more difficult to persuade. Although controlled burning continued through the mid-1980s, most years the number of acres burned was minuscule. In 1986, the park burnt a total of forty-four acres, eight of eucalyptus community in Oakwood Valley and fifteen acres of eucalyptus on Smith Road in Mill Valley in March and April, seventeen acres of redwood and mixed woodland in Muir Woods and four acres of grassland in the Tennessee Valley in September and October.[306] Some of Marin County was exposed to the fires. People in their homes could see fire in the distance and on occasion, could smell smoke

---

[303] Chief, Resource Management to General Superintendent, October 18, 1984, NRMR, Box 1, Correspondence 1984.

[304] *Fire Management Plan, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, February 19, 1985*, NRMR, Box 5.

[305] Brian O'Neill to Curtis B. Mitchell, May 6, 1986; Memorandum of Understanding, Prescribed Fire Management Boundaries Between Golden Gate National Recreation Area and California State Parks and Recreation, May 6, 1986, both NRMR, Box 2, Correspondence 1986; Memorandum of Understanding between Golden Gate National Recreation Area and California State Parks and Recreation, January 9, 1987, NRMR, Box 2, Correspondence, 1987.

[306] Golden Gate National Recreation Area Annual Burn Program 1986, NRMR, Box 2, Correspondence 1987.

and taste ash in the air, but the small acreage involved and the heavy management of the fires made the threat only a perception. For some in Marin County, the perception was very real and worthy of their concern.

When the Park Service announced its 1987 program of controlled burning, park staff expected few objections to the total of twenty-nine acres in three Marin County locations. The Park Service simply continued the pattern established since prescribed burning began in the early 1980s. The program itself was not exceptional; the same kinds and quantities of land were slated for controlled burning as in previous years and the Marin County Fire Department agreed to participate. When the Park Service sent out its typical notice to neighbors and concerned groups, it expected at most a tepid response. Marin County residents had become accustomed to burning and since had been no incidents of uncontrolled fire since the problem at Point Reyes in 1982, little reason to anticipate opposition existed.[307]

A campaign headed by Sandy Ross of the Tamalpais Conservation Club, an avowed opponent of controlled burning, made managed fire into a regional issue. Ross complained that even prescribed fires scarred the hillsides, pointing to the consequences of a controlled burn on Mount Tamalpais in 1984. She beseeched Golden Gate National Recreation Area Superintendent Brian O'Neill to stop the planned burns, using scientific articles that denigrated controlled burns as rationale for ending the program. Ross's objections caught the attention of the press, and area home owners followed her and articulated their own fears. Even though sixty years had passed since the last major fire on Mount Tamalpais and the consequences of an accumulated fuel load of such proportions could be devastating, a visible portion of the public argued that fire suppression ought to continue. The issue gathered momentum at Mount Tamalpais throughout 1988 and 1989. Homeowners enlisted the Sierra Club and objections to controlled burning grew in number and intensity.[308]

Much of the anti–controlled burning sentiment focused on Mount Tamalpais rather than Golden Gate National Recreation Area. A series of hearings in 1988 attacked plans for managed fire within the state park. "I think the Water District [which managed lands in question] ought to forget it," former Mill Valley mayor and Water District board member Jean Barnard opined in a typical expression of opposition. Although the scientific evidence indicated that controlled burning was a necessity, an energized public was able to slow process of implementation. The great fires in Yellowstone in the summer and fall of 1988 also drew attention to fire management. Although the Yellowstone fires were induced by lightning and the Park Service and every other land management agency in the Bay Area disavowed any desire for a "let burn" policy, the spread of fires in the nation's first national park further persuaded opponents that allowing any fire was not only bad policy but dangerous as well. The opposition remained strong into the 1990s, when a major fire in 1991 destroyed a good portion of the hills above Oakland. In no small part as a result, the Marin County Grand Jury issued a report opposing the use of fire as a management tool. In 1995, Point Reyes National Seashore experienced the worst conflagration since the founding of the park, the Vision Fire, which further added to discomfort about fire. Despite ongoing resistance, the Park Service debuted a plan that included 200 acres of controlled

---

[307] Chief Resource Management to General Superintendent, March 4, 1987; "Annual Burn Program 1987"; Brian O'Neill to Stan Rowen, March 10, 1987,all NRMR, Box 2, Correspondence 1987.

[308] Sandy Ross to Brian O'Neill, December 4, 1987, Brian O'Neill to Sandy Ross, December 16, 1987, both NRMR, Box 2, Correspondence 1987; "Lots of Opposition to Controlled Burns," *SFC*, May 26, 1987.

burning over a five-year period in 1992.[309] Prescribed burn policy remained an issue that pitted agency prerogative against public sentiment as well as science against belief.

Grazing also illustrated the tension between planning and implementation. Grazing had been one of the predominant features of Marin County in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although the Park Service typically excluded grazing from national parks, other kinds of areas in the system were open to grazing. Historical instances of grazing in the national parks did occur, but they were few and usually associated with emergencies such as war. National monuments and national recreation areas permitted restricted grazing, and with the establishment of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, grazing leases became an important way to keep longtime Marin County residents happy with their new park.[310]

Grazing had visible impact on the park's landscape. The actual number of animals grazed in the park remained small, but much of the Marin Headlands was dry. Use initiated negative environmental changes. After a Soil Conservation Service study first showed significant impact on parklands in 1974, the Park Service began to restrict grazing two years later. After a subsequent 1977 study showed conditions worsening, the agency refused to renew grazing permits on ecologically fragile lands. The Tennessee Valley, heavily grazed, revealed severe impact by 1981. Judd Howell noted erosion of stream banks, a thistle invasion that resulted from the trampling of native species in open meadows, clogging of ponds from sediment and animal waste, severe trampling and grazing of the fresh water marsh and lagoon, and cattle excrement on a beach that visitors frequented. Proposed short-term solutions included new fencing and proper management, but Howell believed that cows should be excluded from the Tennessee Valley at the "next available opportunity," likely the end of existing grazing leases.[311]

Even if science strongly indicated that grazing would destroy parkland, exclusion of stock was a difficult political goal to attain. Grazing was an integral part of Marin County, an ongoing activity that created a cultural landscape of historic import. Throughout the 1980s, it continued. Objections to the practice grew more frequent as well. On one side stood environmental groups, led by the Sierra Club; opposing them, a cluster of interests that could have only come together in a complicated metropolitan area: old-time ranching interests and conservation and science specialists who did not really favor grazing but who did not approve of the Park Service's methods, strategies, or principles. The Park Service responded in the fashion it had established at the park; planners listened to public sentiment and crafted a document designed to provide as many constituencies with satisfactory outcomes as the condition of land

---

[309] Barry Taranto, "To Burn or Not to Burn, That Is the Question," Mill Valley *Record*, January 27, 1988; Mike Rowan, "Burning Mt. Tam for 'Safety's Sake," *Coastal Post*, February 1, 1988; Maura Thurman, "'Let Burn Fires Unlikely in Marin, Experts Say," *MIJ*, September 18, 1988; Alex Neill, "Grand Jury Douses Plans to Use Controlled Burning on Mt. Tam," *MIJ*, October 12, 1991; Maura Thurman, "Park Plan Calls for Controlled Burns," *MIJ*, September 8, 1992.

[310] Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 150-55; R. Gerald Wright, *Wildlife Management in the National Parks*; Shankland, Steve Mather of the National Parks, 203; Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 52-73; John Hart, *San Francisco's Wilderness Next Door* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1979), 111-21.

[311] Jerry L. Schober to Barry Vogel, July 27, 1976, PFGGNRA I, Box 3, GGNRA Correspondence; Natural Resource Management Specialist to General Superintendent, June 29, 1981, NRMR, Box 1, 1981 Activities; "Golden Gate National Recreation Area Summary of Livestock Grazing for Calendar Year 1982," *Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment*, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California, 1984.

permitted. As in nearly every other circumstance in the Bay Area, such an objective remained elusive. In 1987, after a study showed that one-quarter of Point Reyes National Seashore was overgrazed, the Draft Range Management Guidelines for Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore proposed new more restrictive standards for grazing. Its stated goals were to slow erosion and continue to keep ranching in the park economically viable, but its release set off a struggle about the use of parklands for grazing.[312]

Even though many opposed grazing, their reasons differed greatly. Anne West of the Marin County chapter of the Sierra Club recognized the value of local ranching but regarded the draft as an economic preservation document rather than national park area guidelines. "There is no clear statement," she observed in a letter to the editor of the *Point Reyes Light,* "that protection of national park values...must be the backbone of each decision for our national parks." Other environmental groups challenged her perspective; Carl Munger of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin suggested that "We have too much at stake to permit her the luxury of absolutism." Others seconded the sentiment, calling the draft a model program for managing conflicting interests.[313]

The causes of erosion inspired the disagreements among opponents. West especially saw great and dangerous erosion as a result of grazing, a belief echoed by other observers. From that point of view, the plan was simply a sop to local economic interests in the name of regional harmony, a standard tactic for the Park Service in the Bay Area but a pose resented by Marin residents who saw their area as a preserve. As erosion became the focus of sentiment that opposed the plan, the political terrain became even more complicated. Columnist David V. Mitchell pointed out that the Park Service's own figures dispelled the notion that grazing caused the erosion that silted Tomales Bay, questioning the premise that erosion concerns underpinned the draft document.[314] The multiplicity of perspectives confused the issue. Erosion was real; was grazing the primary catalyst? As grazing opponents argued nuance in an exchange in the newspapers, they promoted misunderstanding and conflict.

The media contributed to escalated tensions. When the *San Francisco Examiner* published a headline "New Marin Range War: Birders vs. Cows," the existing rift deepened. Framed as a battle between Marin County's "environmental movement" and ranchers and the conservation groups that supported them, the newspaper story heightened tensions. Earlier, the Marin County Parks Commission voted to forbid cows from its land. Cows trampled sensitive marshlands and bird habitat, prompting Don Dimitratos, head of the Marin County Parks Department, to assert "there's no room for cows anymore." Ranchers argued that they abided by the terms of their leases. They once owned the land they now leased, selling it with the stipulation that they could lease the properties back for grazing. James Tacherra, a fifth-generation rancher, lamented the decline in ranching. Of the twenty-four dairy ranches he remembered from childhood, only three remained. "The park is a national treasure," an editorial

---

[312] "Draft Range Management Guidelines, Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore," 1987; "Range Management Guidelines, Point Reyes National Seashore," April 1988.

[313] Anne West, "Rangers Blamed for Gullies," *PRL*, November 25, 1987; Carl Munger, "Diatribe Won't Help," *PRL*, December 3, 1987; William Barret, "Reply to Letter," *PRL*, December 3, 1987.

[314] Leon, "This Land Is Our Land," *Pacific Coastal Post*, January 11, 1988, OCPA, Box 10, February 1988; David V. Mitchell, "The Politics of Erosion,"PFGGNRA II, Box 5, Amy Meyer, Letters to, 1981-89.

in the *Coastal Post* averred, "ranching...is a part of that treasure."[315] The emotions on both sides obscured the important issues. Grazing on state and county land was endangered, leaving Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Point Reyes National Seashore, and private land as the only locations for this historic activity in Marin County.

The Park Service and local ranchers reached accommodation over the plan, straining ties between the park and environmental groups such as the Sierra Club. The GMP had given de facto approval to grazing in 1980, but the changing impact on the land required revisiting the issue. In a hearing on February 10, 1988, Point Reyes National Seashore geologist Ed Margason suggested that rainstorms, not grazing, accounted for most of the erosion that silted Tomales Bay. Although geologist Gene Kojan, a resident of Point Reyes Station affiliated with the Sierra Club, angrily opposed Margason's views, the idea that rainstorms and not grazing caused erosion had much political heft. Marin County supervisors and residents were happy with the plan; rancher George Grossi called the guidelines "fair and reasonable" and ranchers agreed to reduce their herds to facilitate study of the causes of erosion. When the principles worked closely with one another, the tension of public venues was reduced. Many environmentalists were sympathetic to the needs of ranchers. Jerry Friedman, chairman of the Point Reyes subcommittee of the Citizen's Advisory Commission and longtime chairman of the Marin County Planning Commission, agreed: "agriculture is in the park to stay," he observed during the meeting in a tacit acknowledgment of the cultural landscapes of the region. Consensus governed resolution at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. When the Citizens' Advisory Committee adopted the seashore's new Range Management Guidelines after a four-hour meeting in May 1993, the ranchers in attendance applauded loudly. Marin County Supervisor Gary Giacomini, a member of a ranching family and a vociferous supporter of continued agricultural activity in Marin County, pronounced himself pleased with the results.[316]

In subsequent years, the stance of the Park Service became crucial to preserving agriculture in Marin County. The agency recognized this natural resource as a cultural landscape, permitting both the continuation of grazing and the preservation of the natural features of the area. The combination of park-supported research that monitored land conditions and grazing leases helped build strong ties between ranchers and the Park Service. From the ranchers' perspective, the Park Service enjoyed independence from special interests that the county parks department did not. As a result, Point Reyes National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area became protectors of historic agriculture in Marin County. The success of these relationships proved to be a triumph of resource management over the strident points of view so common in the Bay Area.

Managing the coastline required the same kind of cooperative vigilance, political alliance, and public relations focus as any other activity in the Bay Area. The Park Service again needed other agencies and entities to achieve its mandate, and again needed to structure its relationships for common objectives much larger than the park to attain its resource management

---

[315] Brad Breithaupt, "Commission Urges End to Bolinas Lagoon Grazing Lease," *MIJ*, January 30, 1988; John Todd, "New Marin Range War: Borders vs. Cows," *SFE*, February 8, 1988; "Knowing When to Stop and When to Start," *Coastal Post*, February 8, 1988.

[316] Laura Impellizzeri, "Despite Angry Objection, Park Grazing Plan Supported," *PRL*, February 11, 1988; Maura Thurman, "Rangers, Ranchers in Accord," *MIJ*, February 12, 1988; "Protect Park Agriculture," Marin County *Independent,* February 20, 1988; Sarah Rohrs, "Park Advisory Commission Adopts Range Guidelines," PFGGNRA II, Box 5, Amy Meyer, letters to, 1991-1994.

goals. Golden Gate National Recreation Area offered many of the recreational uses of the coast, but the agency alone could not protect the resources. Surfers, windsurfers, and bathers, whale watchers, and fishermen described a triangle of coastal use within park boundaries; a combination of federal legislation and local activism was crucial to assuring that the resources necessary for all three uses were available to the public.

Environmentalism became a concern in California during the mid-1960s. The awakening of interest stemmed from the prosperity of the state and the sense of loss that accompanied rapid postwar growth. As open land became suburbs and industrial pollution threatened previously pristine environments, a cry about the quality of the environment rose from the public. The state responded to the 1965 establishment of the Planning and Conservation League, a grassroots group that sought to manage growth, with a series of bills designed to protect the environment. One of these, Assembly Bill 1391, introduced by Assemblyman William Bagley, a Republican from Marin County and a friend of Phil Burton, created the Coastline Conservation Study Commission. It foreshadowed the California Coastal Zone Conservation Commissions' 1975 California Coastal Plan, prepared under the provisions of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.[317]

The National Park Service and Golden Gate National Recreation Area were instantly sympathetic to the coastal plan. It promoted goals and outcomes very similar to those of the park, articulating balance as a primary end, advocating restrictive management of the coast, and promoting viable communities and productive agriculture. Implementation of the plan was left to local governments, a popular decision that in the end came back to haunt coastal management. For the Park Service, a region-wide planning commission that governed coastal activities and embraced values that were indistinguishable from those of the park signaled a positive beginning for a relationship of critical significance to Golden Gate National Recreation Area.[318]

The major coastal issue for Golden Gate National Recreation Area became the threat of impact from increased offshore oil drilling, a direct byproduct of the Reagan-era Department of the Interior. Early in the 1980s, Secretary James Watt sought to unlock federal resources and make them available for development in a fashion not attempted since the Teapot Dome scandals of the 1920s. Watt had little respect for American environmentalism and engaged in an all-out assault on most of the principles of conservation respected by previous secretaries. Rather than initiate change in law, Watt simply assumed administrative fiat, recrafting regulations to suit his purposes. Most prominent among his endeavors was his effort to open offshore federal property to exploratory oil drilling. Much of his effort was directed toward making it possible for large oil conglomerates to explore the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, a battle that the environmental community tied up in the courts and defeated. Watt's agenda also included opening the entire California coast, including the oil-rich waters off the Bay Area, to drilling. Watt focused on the Bodega and Santa Cruz basins, both closed to drilling by Watt's predecessor, Cecil Andrus. Watt had his defenders. "Our company supports your efforts to eliminate unnecessary and burdensome laws and regulations which impede our country's energy development," L.C. Soileau III, Chevron USA's senior vice-president for exploration and land

---

[317] "A Move to Save State Coastline," *SFC*, March 31, 1967; "Bagley Proposes Coastline Conservation Study Group," *MIJ*, March 30, 1967; California Coastal Zone Conservation Commissions, "California Coastal Plan, December 1975," PFGGNRA I, Box 12, State of California.

[318] California Coastal Zone Conservation Commission, "California Coastal Plan, December 1975," PFGGNRA I, Box 12, State of California.

development, wrote the secretary, and many in the business community agreed. In an era in which the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had reached agreement on production capacities, forcing the cost of oil skyward, domestic production—even at the expense of long-accepted conservation goals—seemed possible in the world of politics.[319]

Conservation retained many of its champions, and one of the more vocal among them was John Burton. The younger brother of the powerful Phil Burton, John Burton represented Marin County beginning in the mid-1970s, generally following his powerful brother's lead. Watt's ruling to open the area between the Golden Gate and the Farallon Islands to drilling initiated paroxysms of outrage in the Bay Area. When Watt's office announced that the new regulations for marine sanctuaries did not include a ban on drilling for oil and gas, John Burton pounded the table in front of the U.S. House Interior Subcommittee on the Panama Canal and the Outer Continental Shelf, charging that "lock, stock, and barrel, [Watt] is in the pocket of the oil industry." Watt's regulations were egregious, Burton claimed. They opened valuable offshore lands with little oil near the Bay Area and ignored far more oil-rich lands in the Santa Maria Basin near Santa Barbara. A majority of Congress lined up behind John Burton, as did organized conservation and environmental movements.[320]

Watt's efforts typified his attempts to fracture the consensus that had grown up around conservation. His opponents, he believed, had become complacent, accustomed to having their way, and he expected ineffectual response. Despite his prescient strategy, Watt underestimated the powerful feelings the American public, especially in California, held about the quality of their environment. With the memory of the terrible Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969 still fresh, the idea of offshore drilling threatened Californians' sense of the Golden State's special promise. John Burton's rhetoric inflamed the powerful Reagan administration, which threw its considerable influence behind Watt's plan, but the forces against drilling held strong. Opponents obtained a preliminary injunction against thirty-two leases in the Santa Maria Basin the day before the tracts were slated to be auctioned. Marin County Supervisor Gary Giacomini, whose district was directly affected by the leases, was ecstatic at the ruling. "This is the first glimmer of hope," he observed afterward. "I'd like to think it's more than a glimmer."[321]

Even the combination of high oil prices, enthusiasm for the new Reagan administration, and the support of the oil industry could not stem the powerful forces allied against drilling. Although the Park Service kept quiet during the fray, its leaders in Washington, D.C. and at Golden Gate National Recreation Area secretly cheered the opposition. At Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Citizen's Advisory Commission opposed drilling and asked its elected representatives to follow its lead. Watt's regulatory changes not only sought to open public land to development, but also limited the Park Service's ability to acquire new parks and changed its ways of doing business. Watt favored concessioners and in-holders over all other groups, leaving

---

[319] Hal K. Rothman, *Saving the Planet: The American Response to the Environment in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Inc., 2000), 167; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 744-48; James Williams, *Energy and the Making of Modern California* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1998), 297-304; L.C Soileau III to James G. Watt, February 11, 1981, NRMR, Box 1, Threats to the Park.

[320] Ed Smith, "Burton Denounces Watt for Oil-Drilling Proposal," *MIJ*, March 28, 1981.

[321] Bob Norberg, "Sanctuaries' Drilling Ban May Be Reconsidered," Press Clippings, 1981, Vol. 1, January-May, GOGA- 2376, Box 1; Jon Berry, "Anti-Drilling Forces Win Offshore Oil Tilt," *PRL*, June 4, 1981; Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*, 172-74.

the Park Service particularly defenseless at places that had the potential to generate considerable revenue. Watt's goals and the historic patterns of the agency were antithetical. As a Department of the Interior agency, the Park Service needed its friends in the conservation and environmental community to fight its fight and grapple with Watt. The secretary was a clumsy political operator, frequently wielding a cudgel instead of more delicate instruments. As a result, his regulations were frequently challenged in court and overturned. In a situation entirely typical of the Watt regime, the California congressional delegation succeeded in imposing a moratorium that halted drilling off the coast of the Golden State; the moratorium was extended three times and eventually was applied to the entire California coast. Watt's ideas gained great currency, but effective resistance and the secretary's awkward approach limited his ability to create new realities.[322]

Watt's influence persisted throughout the tenure of the Reagan administration. Watt's successor in 1983, William Clark, followed the same policies with little of the rancor that accompanied his predecessor's pronouncements, and Watt's initial proposal to open the entire California coast to offshore drilling remained viable. In February 1985, the Department of the Interior issued a permit for a test of offshore drilling sixteen miles from Point Reyes. McClelland Engineers of Ventura, California, sought the permit for more than one year. Public protests from residents of Marin, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties at hearings on the permit revealed considerable local resistance, but the administration was sympathetic to exploration efforts. The rhetoric of local control so loudly espoused by the Reagan administration meant little in this instance. Even after the establishment of the Gulf of the Farallones National Sanctuary in 1984, by the end of February 1985, only an EPA permit stood in the way of offshore drilling near the Bay Area. After that permit was approved in May, environmentalists sued to block the test drilling and won a temporary injunction.[323]

The fray continued even as the price of oil dropped precipitously in 1985. Clark's successor, Donald Hodel, sought a compromise in 1985, proposing the opening of only 150 leases to drilling, but withdrew the offer when the oil industry balked at his choice of tracts. When Hodel offered a proposal for a five-year leasing plan in 1987, U.S. Rep. Barbara Boxer and U.S. Rep. Mel Levine of California responded with a bill that banned drilling within 200 miles of the California coast. "They're back with the same old story," Boxer told the press, "and we want to close this show down for good." The leasing proposal created strange and powerful alliances in opposition; Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, the community of Santa Barbara, and the governments of the Bay Area were not likely allies, but under the circumstances their interests coincided. As the perspectives hardened, the opportunities for compromise diminished. Only after the election of George H. Bush in 1988 did the administration agree to a ban on drilling off Point Reyes and only when the president, himself a veteran of the beleaguered domestic oil industry, desperately needed California's fifty-four electoral votes for his re-election did the administration come out in support of a marine sanctuary that permanently protected much of the coast.[324]

---

[322] Acting Regional Director to Director, February 18, 1981, NRMR, Box 1, Threats to the Park; Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*, 58-63, 172-74 Bartke to Haller, March 5, 2002.

[323] Rhonda Parks, "Reagan Administration OKs Offshore Drilling," *PRL*, February 14, 1985; Debbie Schupack, "Environmentalists Sue to Block Offshore Oil Drilling," *PRL*, May 23, 1985.

[324] Paul Peterzell, "Drilling Warfare," *MIJ*, February 3, 1987; Paul Peterzell, "Marin Coast Part of Oil Lease Plan," *MIJ*, February 5, 1987; Joan Reutinger, "Marin Coast Target in New Oil Plan," *Coastal Post*, February 9, 1987; Rob

The offshore drilling issue was another instance in which the Park Service could manage its resources perfectly well, but could not assure their protection without consideration of the larger political questions and the decisions of other federal, state, and local agencies. The offshore drilling situation put the Park Service in the uncomfortable position of rooting for the opponents of the Department of the Interior, not an uncommon position for the rank and file in many federal bureaus during the Reagan administration, but still a situation in which park staff felt they remained loyal to their agency by quietly opposing the dictates and goals of the top echelon of the department. For any individual park staffer, the circumstances created inherent risk; for the park and the Park Service the risk was even greater and the toll on general morale was even higher. At this critical moment, the values of the Park Service and the goals of the Interior Department did not mesh, politicizing any action by park staff and agency officials.

One of the byproducts of the age of hydrocarbon, oil spills, posed the single most potentially destructive threat to the park. Oil spills were common along the California coast since the beginning of oceanic shipping, but the massive three-million-gallon Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969 crystallized opposition and drove home the need for greater protection. The Bay Area, long a major shipping destination and the location of very difficult and stormy waters, experienced a number of oil spills. In 1971, the year before the establishment of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, two oil tankers collided in the Golden Gate, contaminating beaches at Crissy Field and in the Marin Headlands. Under the circumstances, the park had to closely monitor the regulatory mechanisms of shipping. Activities outside the park boundaries could alter the quality of resource management and visitor experience at any moment.

A positive consequence of the presence of so many government agencies in the Bay Area was the development of multiagency planning for emergency situations. Beginning in 1983, the Park Service looked to create a multiagency contingency plan to address possible consequences of a severe oil spill in the Bay Area. The concept of such a plan had been discussed before 1980, but especially in the early 1980s, federal agencies experienced the problem that came to be called "unfunded mandates," the assigning of responsibilities to agencies that were not given the resources to carry out such tasks. For many federal agencies, this meant that important obligations could not be fulfilled within the constraints of their budgets. Agencies and their operatives were often compelled to seek out joint strategies with various kinds of constituent groups to accomplish legally assigned responsibilities. For many agencies and especially many national parks, this was a new approach to management. At Golden Gate National Recreation Area, this tactic did not seem foreign. It was merely an extension of everyday practice since the founding of the park.

As a result, a region-wide, multiagency oil spill contingency plan seemed a plausible strategy for combating outside threats to park resources. The park simply could not respond to such a threat on its own. Not only did it lack the resource base to combat an oil spill of even one-tenth the magnitude of the 1969 Santa Barbara spill, it had no control over the movement of oil tankers and other transportation mechanisms in the Bay Area. In short, the Park Service faced a classic situation; when it came to protecting resources against an oil spill, the park had legally mandated responsibilities to protect resources, but had neither the budget to develop self-contained programs nor the authority to control activities that might lead to such an event. When

---

Wells, "Hodel Explains New Offshore Oil Plan," *PAC*, February 21, 1987; Timothy Polk, "'No Hope for Offshore Oil Compromise," *PAC*, February 27, 1987; Eric Brazil, "Cordell Bank Ban Reported," *SFE*, May 2, 1989; "Drilling Ban off Point Reyes," *SFC*, May 3, 1989; Dara Tom, "Bush Supports Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary," *MIJ*, June 11, 1992.

the Sierra Club initiated a proposal to develop an oil spill contingency plan for Marin County, the Park Service enthusiastically seconded the proposal and helped the club find financing. While negotiating the combination of interests and responsibilities was vexing, a regional contingency plan with a designated lead agency was the best planning strategy available.[325]

Although the public perception of an oil spill focused upon the huge damage that ensued from something like the three million gallons of oil spilled in the Santa Barbara disaster, for the Park Service, smaller-scale, frequent spills and slicks presented a significant natural resources management threat. Nearly every year, Golden Gate National Recreation Area faced some kind of small spill that damaged ecological resources. Tide pools in most of the coastal regions were particularly delicate and even small amounts of oil disrupted these ecological communities. Events such as the February 1986 Rodeo Lagoon spill temporarily disrupted Tidewater goby habitat, causing the Park Service to closely monitor the situation. Heavy rains in subsequent months mitigated much of the damage, limiting population loss. At Aquatic Park, nearby shipping was a constant source of small leaks and spills that continually threatened the historic setting.[326]

Large oil spills remained the single greatest threat to natural resources management on the Golden Gate National Recreation Area coastline. The danger was ever present, and every so often a major spill presented a challenge to the entire structure set up to manage such events. On Halloween 1984, a 632-foot oil tanker, the *Puerto Rican,* burst into flames shortly after passing under the Golden Gate Bridge. The Coast Guard responded by towing the boat out to sea, to a point about eleven miles south of the Farallon Islands almost thirty miles from the continental coast. The direction of the currents indicated that from that point, the seeping light lubrication oil from the tanker would be carried out to the Pacific Ocean, where it would dissipate. Instead, on November 3, the ship tore in half, and the stern section containing more than one million gallons of oil sunk. Almost 100,000 gallons of oil spread out across a wide area, precipitating the first major oil spill inside the park's coastal waters.[327]

Although nowhere near the magnitude of major oil spills, the *Puerto Rican* created significant natural resource management issues for the park. Once a dumping ground for waste of all kinds, the Farallon Islands had been revived after the establishment of Point Reyes National Seashore in 1962 and by the time Golden Gate National Recreation Area was established in 1972, efforts to protect the islands were under way. In 1973, the islands received national wildlife refuge designation; a decade later, just before the *Puerto Rican* spill, the waters around the island were labeled the Point Reyes–Farallon Islands National Marine Sanctuary. After the spill, waterfowl were covered with oil, precipitating a widespread cooperative effort among federal and state agencies and regional environmental groups to save the birds. As dead birds washed up on the beaches of Point Reyes National Seashore, groups of volunteers worked to clean the oil from other birds. Although more than 1,000 birds were covered in oil and hundreds died as a result, the efforts of volunteers helped save countless birds and minimize the

---

325 John H. Davis to John Kriedler, March 8, 1983, NRMR, Box 1, 1983 Activities; Burr to John, February 22, 1983, NRMR, Box 2, Oil Spill Contingency Planning.

326 To: District Managers, February 27, 1987, NRMR, Box 1, Terri J. Tomas, 1982-88; To: Regional Director, Western Region, January 13, 1981, PFGGNRA I, Box 5, GGNRA- Undertakings-Resource Protection; To: District Rangers, February 27, 1987, NRMR, Box 1, 1987 Projects.

327 Jon Stewart, "Fragile Paradise," *California Living Magazine*, December 16, 1984.

ecological consequences of the spill.[328] Even though successful natural resource management depended on factors beyond the park's control, the pattern of joint management and cooperation again yielded dividends. The impact of the spill could not be avoided, but mitigation proceeded quickly and effectively.

Such issues illustrated a number of ongoing natural resource issues for the park. In a populated area, natural resources were susceptible to pressure from the needs of surrounding communities. In some cases, the park could successfully resist pressure from the community. Its chances improved when other entities shared its opposition to a project or plan. In other cases, cooperation was essential if the agency was to achieve its mission. When the Park Service and other area agencies worked together, the consequences of anything from an oil spill to a sewage project could be lessened. Golden Gate National Recreation Area quickly learned to keep its friends close and to let them know of objections to proposals for development. The circumstances placed the Park Service in a tricky position. It had to defend its resource but carefully, and that care sometimes required a pronounced dimension of tact.

With this complicated collection of planning instruments, strategies, and constituencies to manage natural resource managers faced the new century. The implementation of natural resource management planning in the early 1980s signaled a new era, one in which the Park Service moved beyond reaction and into the implementation of plans designed to preserve park resources. Planning created a process, a framework, that gave the Park Service clear reasons for its actions and sanctioned objectives in even the most difficult circumstances. The road from objectives to implementation continued to be fraught with the same perils as before the agency conceived of a direction for the park. The public still held a proprietary view of the park, still largely regarded it as play space, and even those elements of the public that recognized the intrinsic natural resource value of Golden Gate National Recreation Area lands sought to implement group-specific agendas to park planning. The biosphere designation changed global perception of the value of the park's resources and may have opened the way to a different perception of national recreation areas as a whole. The designation compelled not only the park's supporters but land managers in general to see Golden Gate National Recreation Area's lands in new ways. Yet on the whole, the planning process and designations that affirmed the significance of the park's natural resources were only part of a larger more complicated picture of competing desires. Planning gave the park a blueprint, but constituency issues continued to be paramount. Constituencies may have respected the park and its plans, but that did not diminish their desire to shape policy to their ends, which were not necessarily the ends that planning and NPS policy dictated. Implementing programs still encountered the very same kind of resistance that characterized the park's early years. Natural resource management had become an institutionalized process, but it could not always make the step from process to program. The issues that vexed natural resource management were at the core of the management dilemma of Golden Gate National Recreation Area: people's proprietary feelings for parklands stood in the

---

[328] Sanctuary Coordinator to All Staff, November 6, 1984, NRMR, Box 12, Oil Spill Contingency Planning; Katherine Ellison, "Volunteers Un-Goo Birds off Golden Gate," *SJMN*, November 8, 1984; Mary Leydecker, "Slick Fouls Point Reyes," *MIJ*, November 9, 1984; Teresa Allen, "Slick Watch," *MIJ*, November 10, 1984; "Wash, Blow Dry for Oily Birds," *SFC*, November 12, 1984.

way of implementing policy too often to ignore. The Park Service could fashion policy with public support, but it could not always count on the public to support the implementation of the policy.